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RACK SECURITY MECHANISM

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

- 5 The invention relates to a computer component rack and more particularly to a system for locking an individual tray mounted within a computer component rack.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

- 10 Where there is a demand for multiple computer components in compact areas, component racks are often provided for slidably mounting components. Each component typically is attached to a tray, and the tray is positioned in the rack where it is able to captively slide. If a user needs to gain access to a particular component, the tray is slid out of the component rack, providing the desired access. Once the user is
15 finished with the component, the tray is slid back into the component rack. Often threaded fasteners (such as, e.g., screws) secure the tray to the rack in a closed position. However, this approach poses a security risk as any party with a screwdriver can open the rack tray by unscrewing the fasteners and pulling out the tray. Once the tray is pulled out, the party has full access to the component stored in the tray, and the party
20 may remove such components at will. For the foregoing reasons, there is a need for an apparatus and system for better securing the tray in the closed position within the component rack.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

- 25 The following briefly describes some embodiments of the present invention. A locking cover is provided for a component rack. At least one lock mechanism is mounted within the cover. There is also a track for supporting a sliding security plate. The lock mechanism couples with the sliding security plate, such that when activated,
30 the lock mechanism extends the sliding security plate laterally from an end of the cover to block an access aperture, and thus access to one or more fasteners holding the tray in place.

Embodiments of the locking cover in example applications include the use of the cover in the following scenarios as an element of a locking system for a component rack. The rack has within it a slidably mounted tray. The tray anchors to the component rack in a closed position with at least one fastener. In general, removal of the tray typically requires access to and removal of at least one fastener. A cover mounts to the tray. The cover includes within its structure a locking mechanism. The general functional requirement of the locking mechanism is that it prevents access through an access port to at least one fastener while in a locked position, and allows access through the access port to the at least one fastener while in an unlocked position.

According to one aspect of the invention, the fastener is a threaded fastener, such as a screw or bolt.

According to one aspect of the invention, the locking mechanism is a key lock. The internal workings of the key lock include a pawl, a track, and a sliding security plate, such that when the key lock rotates toward a locked position, the pawl slides the security plate along the track. This action covers the at least one fastener anchoring the tray.

In two further embodiments of the invention, the locking mechanism is either a combination lock, or a padlock.

The position of the actual locking mechanism can vary. The locking mechanism can reside at one end of the cover, proximal to the at least one fastener. Alternatively, the locking mechanism can reside distal from the at least one fastener, in which case the sliding security plate extends to cover the fastener or fasteners.

According to another aspect of the invention, the tray anchors to the component rack with two threaded fasteners proximal to a first end of the cover. The tray could additionally be anchored to the component rack with at least one threaded fastener proximal to a second end of the cover, if desired.

In one embodiment of the invention, the cover forms a handle for

pulling and pushing the tray in and out of the component rack. Both the cover and the security plate could be made of any number of materials including plastic and metal.

5 **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

The aforementioned features and advantages, and other features and aspects of the present invention, will become better understood with regard to the following description and accompanying drawings, wherein:

10 **FIG. 1** is a perspective view of a tray and lockable cover according to one embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a single rack containing multiple components and a single cover according one embodiment of the present invention;

15 **FIG. 3** is a perspective view of a cutout portion of a rack and cover according to another embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 4 is a schematic diagram of one end of a cover according to one embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 5 is a schematic diagram of internal workings at one end of the cover according to one embodiment of the present invention;

20 **FIG. 6** is a perspective view of additional lock configurations to additional embodiments of the present invention;

FIG. 7 is yet another perspective view of a lock mechanism and cover according to one embodiment of the present invention; and

25 **FIG. 8** is still another perspective view of another lock configuration and cover according to an additional embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

30 The present invention includes a cover 10 for a tray 14 of a computer component rack 12. The cover 10 mounts to a front facing side of the tray 14, which slides in and out of the component rack 12. The structure of the cover 10 lends itself to being used as a handle for moving the tray 14. The trays 14 are often removably fastened to the component racks 12 in closed positions by threaded fasteners 28. An added feature of

the cover 10 is that it includes a locking mechanism 16, which inhibits access to the threaded fasteners 28 when in a locked position.

Referring now in detail to the drawings wherein like parts are designated by like reference numerals throughout, **FIGS. 1-8** illustrate example embodiments of a locking system for a component rack according to the present invention. Although the present invention will be described with reference to the example embodiments illustrated in the figures it should be understood that the present invention can be embodied in many alternative forms of embodiment. In addition, any suitable size, shape, or type of elements or materials could be utilized.

According to one embodiment of the present invention, **FIG. 1** shows the tray 14 for holding one or more components 30. The tray 14 is made of a suitable material, such as, e.g., steel or plastic. The tray 14 is sized and shaped to hold components manufactured by, e.g., Sun Microsystems, Inc., and fit within a component rack 12 (**FIG. 2**). A cover 10 mounts along a front facing portion of the tray 14. As illustrated, the cover 10 extends the length of the tray 14 face. However, the cover 10 need not extend in this manner. The cover 10 can mount to merely a portion of the face of the tray 14, thus being shorter in length.

A key lock 20, for securely locking the tray 14, resides within the cover 10. There is an access port 18 at one end of the cover 10. The access port 18 provides access to a threaded fastener or fasteners 28, which removably fasten the tray 14 in a closed position. Through internal workings of the key lock 20, as discussed at a later point herein, when a user inserts a key (not shown) into the key lock 20 and rotates the key, a sliding security plate 26 moves in a lateral direction between a locked position and an unlocked position. In the locked position, the sliding security plate 26 substantially covers access port 18 (**FIG. 2**) and threaded fastener 28. As a result, the threaded fastener 28 is no longer accessible via that access port 18. The security plate 26 is shown as a solid metal plate. However, it may be of a porous nature, meshed, grided, perforated, or other configuration, so long as it maintains the required strength and rigidity to serve as a significant hindrance to the access port 18. The security plate 26 can also be of another material, such as, e.g., polymeric materials like plastic or

composite, or ceramic materials. Further, the security plate 26 could slide laterally, or alternatively move in other ways such as sliding vertically, rotating, pivoting, or even closing in from multiple directions as separate pieces. Even further, the shape of the security plate 26 can vary from the straight rectangular shape, to a square, triangle, pentagon, octagon, etc., in planar, and non-planar variations.

FIG. 2 illustrates one application of the present invention where multiple components 30 mount within a component rack 12. These components 30 may include a variety of items. For example, each component 30 may be computer-related hardware, a fan, a group of fans, a data storage device, or an electronic device. A tray 14, as illustrated in **FIG. 1**, supports each of the components 30. The tray 14 shown is merely an example of a relatively standard type of tray utilized in the computer industry. It has four walls and a floor. The side walls include bearings that allow the sides to slidably extend and retract. In various locations throughout the tray 14, there are a plurality of mounting edges and apertures for fixing the tray 14 within a structure in various ways. Multiple other variations of trays 14 are possible. Each of the trays 14 anchors to the component rack 12 in a closed position with at least one threaded fastener 28. A cover 10 resides on a front facing side of the tray 14 that is accessible by the user and that allows the user to install and remove trays 14 as desired.

In one embodiment, the cover 10 mounts to the front facing side of the tray 14 with four screws (not shown). The screws are attached through a back side of the front facing side of the tray 14 and are screwed into a backside of the cover 10. Thus, if the tray 14 is in a closed and locked position, there is no access to the screws to unscrew and remove the cover 10. To gain access to the screws, one must be able to pull open the tray 14 and reach around to the back side of the front facing side of the tray 14.

In the embodiment shown in **FIG. 2**, the cover 10 has the additional feature of being shaped in the form of a handle to assist the user in the extension and retraction of a tray 14. When the user desires to stow the tray 14, the user places his or her hand around the cover and exerts the required force on the cover 10 to retract the tray 14 into a closed position. Alternatively, when the user desires to gain access to the contents of

the tray 14, the user grabs on to the handle structure of the cover 10 and pulls the tray 14 outward from the rack 12.

5 The locking mechanism 16 resides at one end of the cover 10, such that when rotated, the sliding security plate 26 extends over a portion of the tray 14 and the component rack 12, covering the access port 18 to the threaded fastener 28. Thus, a screwdriver cannot be used to remove the threaded fastener 28.

10 The number and type of fasteners employed in practicing the present invention can vary. For example, as illustrated in **FIG. 3**, there may be multiple threaded fasteners 28 provided to anchor the tray 14 in a closed position. Alternatively, clip-type fasteners, squeeze fasteners, rotate-to-lock fasteners, shaft-and-pin fasteners, and myriad other removable fasteners in any number may be utilized to anchor tray 14 in place as desired, so long as the sliding security plate 26 can extend across the access port 18, blocking
15 access to the fastener as desired.

FIGS. 4 and 5 illustrate the end of the cover 10 according to one embodiment of the present invention. In this example, the internal components of the locking mechanism function as follows. A user first inserts a key (not shown) into key lock 20. The key lock 20 couples to a pawl 22, which in turn couples to the sliding security plate 26. As the user rotates the key lock 20, the rotational energy translates to the pawl 22 which moves the sliding security plate 26 in a lateral direction depending upon the direction of rotation of the key lock 20. In a first rotational direction (e.g., in the direction of arrow A in **FIG. 5**), the sliding security plate 26 laterally moves to cover the
20 access port 18. Once in a fully extended ("locked") position, the sliding security plate 26 substantially covers the threaded fastener 28 (or fasteners), inhibiting access to the threaded fastener 28. A track 24 provides the required support for the sliding security plate 26 to sufficiently position and hold the sliding security plate 26 in place. In practice, at such time, the user then removes the key from the key lock 20 leaving the
25 cover 10 and sliding security plate 26 in a closed and locked position. The sliding security plate 26 blocks access to the threaded fastener 28, thus inhibiting a potential infiltrator from removing the threaded fastener 28 and gaining unauthorized access to the tray 14 and components 30.
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If the user desires to gain access to the tray 14 and the particular component 30 stored within, the procedure just described is reversed. The user inserts a key into the key lock 20 and rotates the key lock 20 in a second rotational direction (e.g., in the direction of arrow B in **FIG. 5**). This causes the pawl 22 to retract the sliding security plate 26 until the sliding security plate 26 fully retracts and access to the threaded fastener 28 is once again available through access port 18. At such time, the user then proceeds with the removal of the particular fastener or fasteners 28 anchoring the tray 14 in place, and pulls out the tray 14.

The position and number of the locking mechanism 16 can also vary. For example, as illustrated in **FIG. 6**, there may be multiple locking mechanisms 16 located at either end of the cover 10. Alternatively, a single locking mechanism 16 may be positioned in a more central location along the cover 10. In such an instance, the internal lock workings include a pawl 22 that couples to a longer sliding security plate 26 such that the end of the sliding security plate 26 can extend to the access port 18 and cover the threaded fastener 28 as desired. The locking mechanism 16 may also be positioned such that the sliding security plate 26 can extend beyond the fasteners to engage with the component rack 12 and hold the tray 14 in place in addition to blocking access to the fasteners 28.

Further, the type of locking mechanism 16 may also vary. For example, according to **FIG. 7**, the locking mechanism may be in the form of a combination lock 21. To gain access to the tray 14, the user would first enter in the required combination, then slide the sliding security plate 26 until the access port 18 reveals the particular fastener or fasteners 28. Again, the user would remove the fastener or fasteners 28 and pull out the tray 14.

In still another variation of locking mechanism, **FIG. 8** depicts a locking mechanism 16 in the form of a padlock 32. In this figure, on the left side of the cover 10 illustrates the lock mechanism with the padlock removed, while on the right side of the cover 10 the illustration shows the padlock 32 locking the sliding security plate 26 in place. One should note that the use of two locking mechanisms, one on either end of the

cover 10, while possible, is not a requirement and is merely for illustrative purposes only to show the locked and unlocked positions in a padlock-based mechanism. To gain access to a tray 14 with this form of lock, the user first unlocks and removes the padlock 32. Then the user then slides the security plate 26 by the lock aperture 34 until the
5 access port 18 reveals itself. To lock the cover 10, the user slides the security plate 26 over access port 18, joining the lock holes 34. The user then threads the padlock 32 through the lock apertures 34 and locks the padlock 32, thus locking the cover 10.

Numerous modifications and alternative embodiments of the invention will be
10 apparent to those skilled in the art in view of the foregoing description. Accordingly, this description is to be construed as illustrative only and is for the purpose of teaching those skilled in the art the best mode for carrying out the invention. Details of the structure may vary substantially without departing from the spirit of the invention, and exclusive use of all modifications that come within the scope of the appended claims is
15 reserved. It is intended that the invention be limited only to the extent required by the appended claims and the applicable rules of law.